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Letter dated 17 July 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith comments by the Information and Press Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the fourth anniversary of the crash of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in eastern Ukraine (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) D. **Polyanskiy**
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Annex to the letter dated 17 July 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Comments by the Information and Press Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the fourth anniversary of the crash of the Malaysia Airlines Boeing aircraft in eastern Ukraine

Four years have passed since the crash of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in Donbas. The disaster claimed the lives of 298 innocent people, who were nationals of many States. We again express our condolences to the victims' families and loved ones.

The Russian Federation has, from the outset, consistently advocated a thorough and objective international investigation of the Malaysia Airlines Boeing plane disaster, and it spearheaded the adoption of Security Council resolution 2166 (2014). Our country immediately offered all necessary technical and expert assistance, including assistance based on its experience of investigating the crash of a Siberia Airlines plane shot down by Ukrainian air defence forces over the Black Sea in 2001.

The Netherlands did not, however, allow Russia to be part of the joint investigation team and chose to develop a pre-prepared version of events, while practically ignoring the entire time the crucial information that Russia contributed to the investigation both on a voluntary basis and within the framework of a legal assistance mechanism.

The bias and lack of transparency of the current investigation, the reliance on information from social networks and unverified open sources and the collaboration with pseudo investigators from Bellingcat who are known for their fake news, were causes for concern.

Ukraine, although obviously an interested party, remains a full member of the joint investigation team and effectively has the chance to influence the outcome of the investigation. A blind eye has been turned to Kiev's failure to provide important evidence, such as data from radar stations, information on the location and activity of Ukrainian defence forces and recordings of the conversations of Ukrainian flight controllers.

It is glaringly obvious that the Netherlands has practically absolved Kiev of blame for failing to close the airspace over the region of the military activities in the east of the country.

At the end of May 2018, the Netherlands and Australia did not wait for Russia's responses to requests for legal assistance on the MH17 case from the Dutch prosecution service in March, April and May 2018, and they made unfounded accusations against Russia of involvement in the crash of the Malaysia Airlines jet and demanded that Russia enter into negotiations to discuss the legal consequences of its alleged liability, including the payment of compensation to relatives of the victims of the air disaster. In so doing, these two member countries of the joint investigation team demonstrated their unwillingness to pursue full and constructive cooperation on the MH17 case, as well as their lack of interest in conducting a comprehensive, objective and independent international investigation.

In a statement to mark the fourth anniversary of the crash of flight MH17, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, Julie Bishop, spoke about a proposal made

to Russia by the Netherlands and Australia to "open dialogue around the circumstances leading to the tragic loss of innocent lives". This is precisely the kind of cooperation that we have been calling for since 2014, but it has taken four years for our partners to realize the need for it. So much time has been lost.

Russia remains committed to Security Council resolution 2166 (2014) and is still prepared to cooperate with the investigation, so as to establish the truth and bring those responsible to justice.